

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 AF-04 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 L-01

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FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1139

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY

S E C R E T PONTA DEL GADA 0162

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MILI, PO

SUBJECT: MILITARY COUP A POSSIBILITY IN AZORES.

REF: PONTA DELGADA 138.

1. FLA LEADERS HAVE INFORMED CONSOFF THAT MILITARY FORCES
THROUGHOUT AZORES NOW PREPARED EXECUTE COUP TO DETACH AZORES
FROM CONTINENT. ON MAY 29, ANTONIO GOMES DEMENESES (REFTEL)
AND JOSE FRANCO, A CATTLE BREEDER, FORMERLY ACTIVE IN MAPA
AND NOW FLA LEADER, UNEXPECTEDLY CONTACTED PARRIS. THEY INDICATED
THAT ON MAY 28, COLONEL RENATO GILBOTELHO DE MIRANDA, COMMANDER
OF 18TH INDEPENDENT INFANTRY BATTALION ON SAO MIGUEL, HAD
APPROACHED FRANCO TO REQUEST FLA COLLABORATION IN COUP BY
PORTUGUESE ARMY UNITS IN THE AZORES TO "LIBERATE" ISLANDS FROM
CONTINENT. MIRANDA TOLD FRANCO THAT ARMY UNITS ON FAIAL
HAD ALREADY AGREED SUPPORT COUP AND THAT HE EXPECTED 17TH
INFANTRY BATTALION ON TERCEIRA TO FOLLOW. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT
POLICE COMMANDER ON SAO MIGUEL, AND ARMY OFFICER, HAD AGREED
BACK COUP. FRANCO SAID THAT MIRANDA, AN AZOREAN AND CHARTER
MEMBER OF MFA FEARS HE WILL SOON BE PURGED FROM ARMY. HE CLAIMS

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MIRANDA AND MANY OTHER OFFICERS IN AZORES DISSATISFIED WITH

CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN PORTUGAL AND THAT TROOPS, VIRTUALLY ALL OF WHICH AZOREAN, SYMPATHETIC TOWARD INDEPENDENCE. FRANCO HAS ASSURED MIRANDA OF FULL FLA SUPPORT.

2. FRANCO AND MIRANDA BELIEVE THAT CURRENT MOMENT OPPORTUNE FOR COUP BECAUSE INSTABILITY CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN LISBON WOULD HINDER ASSEMBLY OF RELIABLE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE TO RECONQUER AZORES. THEY BELIEVE, MOREOVER, THAT COUP IN AZORES WOULD TRIGGER SIMILAR ACTION BY MODERATE FORCES IN LISBON. THEY HESITANT, HOWEVER, TO PROCEED WITHOUT USG GUARANTEES OF PROMPT RECOGNITION INDEPENDENT AZORES AND OF EMERGENCY ECONOMIC AID IN IMMEDIATE POST-COUP PERIOD. AID NECESSARY TO AVOID SHORTAGES SUCH ESSENTIALS AS WHEAT AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS NORMALLY IMPORTED FROM CONTINENT. FRANCO EMPHASIZED THAT SEPERATISTS WOULD NEED AID ONLY AFTER COUP A SUCCESS; THAT NO USG COVERT AID NECESSARY PRIOR TO ACTION. FRANCO REQUESTED REPLY HIS REQUEST BY NOON, JUNE 1. HE SAID HE DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER OR

NOT ARMY WILL GO THROUGH WITH COUP IN ABSENCE OF GUARANTEES, BUT BELIEVES THEY HAVE PASSED POINT OF NO RETURN. FLA, IN ANY CASE, PLANS TO PROCEED WITH ITS OWN PLANS FOR FORCIBLE TAKEOVER OF ISLANDS WITH OR WITHOUT GUARANTEE. FRANCO INDICATED THAT PLANS WELL ADVANCED AND THAT FLA CERTAIN OF SUCCESS.

3. FRANCO ALSO WARNED PARRIS THAT LEFTIST GROUPS ON SAO MIGUEL CURRENTLY PLANNING DEMONSTRATION AGAINST NATO AND AMERICAN PRESENCE AT

LAJES. PURPOSE OF DEMONSTRATION, WHICH MAY INCLUDE ATTACK ON CONSULATE, TO EMBARRASS USG AND ENABLE GOP TO TAKE FIRMER STAND IN LAJES NEGOTIATIONS. HE DID NOT SPECIFY SOURCES HIS INFORMATION.

4. I INFORMED FRANCO THAT US POLICY ON AZOREAN INDEPENDENCE ONE OF STRICT NEUTRALITY AND THAT IT UNLIKELY INFORMATION HE HAD GIVEN ME WOULD CHANGE IT. I INFORMED HIM, HOWEVER, THAT I WOULD REPORT OUR CONVERSATION.

5. COMMENT: THOUGH FRANCO STORY MAY BE BLUFF, IT HAS RING OF TRUTH. IT HAS BEEN RUMORED HERE THAT MIRANDA AND LOCAL POLICE CHIEF UNHAPPY WITH CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN PORTUGAL AND
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SYMPATHETIC TO LOCAL SEPERATIST MOVEMENTS. CONSOFFS HAVE PERSONALLY HEARD MIRANDA CRITICIZE TOP MEMBERS OF MFA. FURTHERMORE, FRANCO EMPHASIS THAT HE DESIRES NOTHING FROM US IN ADVANCE OF COUP APPEARS TO INDICATE CONFIDENCE ON HIS PART THAT HE CAN COUNT ON TROOPS. IF, IN FACT, FLA AND LOCAL ARMY UNITS NOW COLLABORATING TO PLAN COUP, WE BELIEVE IT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL AND THAT WOULD BE SUPPORTED BY POPULATION IN GENERAL. PRINCIPLE POINTS RESISTANCE WOULD BE NAVY RADIO STATION AND TWO PATROL

BOATS IN PONTA DELGADA AND AIR BASE FOUR AT LAJES FIELD.
TROOPS COMPOSING THESE UNITS CONTINENTALS AS ARE OFFICERS.
IT UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE HOLD OUT VERY LONG
AGAINST SUPERIOR ARMY FORCE. WE BELIEVE THAT SITUATION HERE
BUILDING TOWARD CLIMAX OF SOME KIND. WE TAKING PRECAUTION OF
DISCREETLY TRANSFERRING CONSULATES NONESSENTIAL CLASSIFIED
FILES TO LAJES FIELD.
PARIS

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